

Statement of Ten Scientists on Atomic Testing Published 15 October 1956

Does this statement advocate a unilateral suspension of testing?

The statement opens as follows: "For some time Governor Adlai Stevenson has urged that the United States take the lead and renounce further H-bomb tests for as long a time as other nations likewise refrain from testing these devices. This suggestion has been attacked as advocating a dangerous unilateral action which would permit the Russians to get ahead of the United States in nuclear technology." The statement then goes on to say these criticisms have little validity.

Later the statement reads "It appears to us that Mr. Stevenson's proposal might be a useful way to get the negotiations out of the deadlock stage..." The statement continues "Additional advantages of such a step would be: (1) decrease exposure to radioactive fallout; (2) might postpone time when other nations possess the H-bomb; (3) increase U.S. prestige in Western Europe and Asia; (4) provide an important test of Soviet intentions.

Senator McCarthy (page 26 of the hearings) states "The ten scientists clearly did not advocate 'unilateral' moratorium on testing." As indicated above and through a careful analysis of the statement of the ten scientists they clearly advocate a proposal which they attribute to Governor Stevenson. The question remaining is whether the proposal was for a unilateral suspension. At the time Mr. McCone wrote his letter to the scientists on 15 October 1956 he, of necessity, relied on the published text of the scientists which states Stevenson's proposal to be "that the U. S.

take the lead and renounce further H-bomb tests for as long a time as other nations likewise refrain from testing these devices." Neither in this sentence nor in the rest of the statement are there any words or even a suggestion that the proposed U.S. action would be contingent upon agreements with any other nations. In fact, one of their arguments was that they were proposing a step which could not be delayed indefinitely by negotiations, presumably because it was not dependent upon negotiations. Thus, the naked proposal which the scientists supported and for which so-called advantages were cited was solely that the U.S. renounce H-bomb testing with no suggestion of an agreement (whether policed or unpoliced) with other nations that they likewise would renounce H-bomb testing.

Senator McCarthy states (page 26 of the hearings) that it was made clear in the hearings of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy (confirmation hearings for Mr. McCone of 2 July 1958) that the scientists did not advocate unilateral suspension of testing. Those hearings reflect some discussion of whether the proposal was for unilateral action. Senator Anderson, in the hearings, indicates that one of the scientists insisted that they did not recommend unilateral action. This was presumably based on further discussion with the Senator. Mr. McCone, basing his reply on the statement released by the scientists, stated "It was my impression at the time, sir, that the idea was that if we would go ahead and stop tests, why, then, the Russians would also stop testing. It was unilateral in that respect." At those hearings, Mr. Hollifield, in speaking to the position of the scientists, stated "I have debated in public with Dr. Linus Pauling against this so-called position which, as I understand it, is a bit fuzzy and is quite a bit on the unilateral side."

It may be true that some of the scientists would not, in their own minds, have recommended U.S. unilateral suspension of testing, nevertheless, in their published statement there is no suggestion of international agreements whether policed or not. Therefore, the action advocated by the scientists to be taken by the U.S. was unilateral since it did not depend on agreements with other nations.

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